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## U.S. Working to Mend Ties With Nigerians

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LAGOS, Nigeria, Aug. 2—It is visiting time in Nigeria and a large number of the arrivals are American businessmen, brought to black Africa's most populous, prosperous and powerful country by the rapidly growing commercial opportunities here.

There is also a steady parade of high-level Carter Administration officials, who have come in an effort to improve the somewhat mottled relations with Nigeria, which, after Saudi Arabia, is the biggest supplier of crude oil to the United States. In the last few weeks Vice President Mondale has been here, as was Richard M. Moose, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. An earlier visitor was Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, who was on what American diplomats described privately as a fact-finding tour.

The officials have come here for many of the same reasons as the businessmen—in the hope that Nigeria will increase trade with the United States and help reduce what might this year be the largest American trade deficit with any country, up to \$13 billion.

Vice President Mondale signed an agreement that provides for increased agricultural and technical exchanges. The Carter Administration hopes this will lead to deeper inroads into the Nigerian consumer market by American business.

### Nigerians Uneasy Over U.S. Policy

The recent visits have also been intended to mend the political relations between Washington and the new civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari, according to Western diplomats and other analysts here and in Washington.

According to such officials as Mr. Moose and others, the Nigerians are concerned about the American role in attempts to resolve the twin crises of southern Africa—the question of independence for South-West Africa, or Namibia, from South Africa, and the question of majority rule in South Africa itself. Nigerian officials believe that the Carter Administration has been slow to exert influence on the South Africans.

"Politically the Nigerians keep needing us—that we should withdraw American investment from South Africa, that we should push for a full economic blockade," a well-placed American official commented. "Our argument is that economic blockades have never been shown to be effective. Our argument has also

taken into account the fact that several neighboring countries are heavily dependent on South Africa economically."

"But on the subject of sanctions the Nigerians are holier than the Pope," he went on, adding, in reference to the countries bordering South Africa, "They can be—they are not as involved as front-line states are."

### Reagan's Prospects Assessed

Nigerian officials say privately they are worried by the prospects of a victory by Ronald Reagan in the United States election in November. Already influential foreign-policy makers here are assessing what a Reagan victory might mean to Nigerian-American relations. These relations could conceivably suffer, in the view of Western diplomats, if Mr. Reagan should be elected and did not act forcefully with regard to South-West Africa.

Some Nigerian officials are apparently distressed at comments attributed to Reagan advisers such as Joseph Churba, who said in Johannesburg in June that he would urge Mr. Reagan, if elected, to end the United States embargo on sales of arms to South Africa, to set up a Navy presence at the Simonstown base, near Cape Town and to help the South African armed forces strengthen themselves in matters relating to the security of the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope, especially in regard to helicopters.

A spokesman for Mr. Reagan subsequently disowned the comments, saying that Mr. Churba, who is president of the Center for International Security, a research organization in Washington, was not speaking the candidate.

### Assurances Given by Mondale

Vice President Mondale spent a lot of time assuring Alex I. Ekwueme, Vice President of Nigeria, and other officials that American policy toward black Africa would not change significantly if President Carter was defeated. Mr. Mondale also sought to convey to the Nigerians that the United States had "limited leverage" with the South Africans but that the Carter Administration would keep pressing for greater concessions on South-West Africa and on the question of racial equality in South Africa.

Still, as a high American official put it, if the Nigerians are convinced that American resolve over South-West Africa and South Africa is slackening, "then they won't have any compunctions about using the oil weapon."

Some Western diplomats here still are surprised that a cutback or cutoff in oil

supplies to the United States, which gets 16 percent of its petroleum imports from Nigeria, was not used by the former military Government during 1975 and 1976, the low point in Nigerian-American relations.

That situation was largely brought about, according to senior Carter Administration officials, by the efforts of President Gerald R. Ford and his Secretary of State, Henry A. Kissinger, to get the Nigerians to back Unita, the pro-Western guerrilla group in Angola. The United States had mounted a diplomatic campaign to prevent the Organization of African Unity from recognizing the Popular Liberation Movement, the Marxist group that defeated Unita in the Angolan civil war.

Lieut. Gen. Olesgun Obasanjo, who was then the military head of state in Nigeria, reacted adversely and even asked that Secretary Kissinger not visit here, as he wished to. Western diplomats here say one reason the Nigerians may have decided against a reduction of oil shipments was that there was a surfeit of crude oil on the market at the time, and since 45 percent of Nigerian oil is purchased by the United States, the Obasanjo administration may not have wanted to lose needed revenue.

During Mr. Mondale's visit the Nigerians expressed concern over possible renewal of American aid to the Unita group, which has again appealed to the West for money and arms. "We assured the Nigerians that we have absolutely no intention of becoming involved with Unita," a senior American official said. "We have absolutely no intention of changing our Angola policy."

### U.S. Seeks Cubans' Withdrawal

The Nigerians have also reportedly pressed the Carter Administration about when it intends to recognize the Popular Liberation Movement Government of President Eduardo dos Santos in Angola. Washington has said that it will not grant recognition until Cuban troops in Angola are withdrawn. The Nigerians feel that the Cubans will be withdrawn when the South-West African issue is settled.

The Nigerians have strongly supported the United States on the American hostages in Iran and on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. But they expressed chagrin at what is regarded here as the clumsy manner in which President Carter dispatched Mohammed Ali, the heavyweight boxer, to ask the Nigerians to boycott the Moscow Olympics. As it turned out, Nigeria sent its team.